

Testimony of Korene Garcia
Bridgeport Public School Parent
Testimony for Senate Bill 1195
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
March 24th, 2011

My Name is Korene Garcia and my husband and I are the parents of two children in the Bridgeport Public School system. I am a Bridgeport (PAC) Parent Advisory Council Leader and (BAEO) Black Alliance for Educational Options member. Today, I am not only speaking for my babies but for every child in my community who has suffered from a broken state funding system. I raise my voice in support of Senate Bill 1195.

Under the current ECS (Education Cost Sharing) formula, cities with similar student demographics, net unequal education budgets. According to a state funding chart example by ConnCAN, if Bridgeport raises \$2000 in local property taxes for education, and the state provides \$10,000, combined the city spends \$12,000 per pupil. By contrast, if New Haven raises \$4000 in local property taxes for education, and the state provides \$12,000, combined the city spends \$16,000 per pupil. Consequently, the New Haven student with similar learning needs receives \$4000 more than the Bridgeport student for a Connecticut Public School education. This is the definition of state-subsidized inequality.

The current ECS formula also unduly disadvantages poorer areas by funding without regard to town wealth. For example, if Greenwich raises \$16,000 in local property taxes for education and the state provides \$1,000; combined the town spends \$17,000 per pupil. Remembering the per pupil budgets of Bridgeport at \$12,000 and New Haven at \$16,000, we realize that the ECS is state-sponsored stratification.

Senate Bill 1195, set to replace the ECS formula, is a strong move away from our state's punishment of students because of their residence in a poorer city or town. Under this bill students are funded according to their instructional needs. Furthermore, low-income students and those with disabilities will receive additional state funds. The new formula will also consider town wealth when calculating the state contribution. Finally, this bill ensures that funding will flow to the public option where the student matriculates, making money available to schools of choice.

In short, Senate Bill 1195 puts students first in education reform. Connecticut can close the achievement gap by funding public education according to students' particular learning needs and socio-economic challenges.